

on corporate mergers. Towns all over Ohio have seen what happens when companies merge and create just one employer in a community. It often means plant or store closures. It means workers have no competitors in town to go to for higher wages.

Rural towns in Ohio and across the country watch companies come in, knowing they are the only game in town, and they offer workers a take-it-or-leave-it offer at rock-bottom wages that don't even pay the bills, but it is the only place to go.

Sometimes that is the whole point of the merger, to cut what corporations call labor costs, what the rest of us call jobs, paychecks, or livelihoods.

Now the President is making it clear that when we review mergers, we need to look at and take into account whether they will lead to lower wages for workers.

All actions come down to the same goal, increasing workers' power by cutting through redtape that keeps workers' wages down.

We build on this progress, these important steps, by passing the Protect the Right to Organize Act. To have a strong, growing middle class, we have to have strong unions. The Protecting the Right to Organize Act would start to level the playing field and finally give workers a fighting chance against corporate union-busting tactics.

We all saw what happened with Amazon this year. One of most powerful corporations in the world, and they would not be raking in profits without the hard work and dedication of its hundreds of thousands of American workers. Yet it unleashed all of its billions and billions and billions of dollars' worth of power to fight its own workers.

When workers try to organize in 21st century America, it is never a fair fight. This bill would strengthen the punishment against companies that violate workers' right to organize and that retaliate against union organizers.

It would close loopholes that allow employers to misclassify their employees as supervisors and independent contractors, often stripping them of their overtime they have earned and avoiding paying their fair share and giving workers the benefits they deserve.

A union card is a ticket to middle-class life. We just need corporations to let workers organize to take control over their career and their families.

In closing, last week, I was up in the far northwest corner of my State in Bryan, OH, visiting the Spangler Candy Company. It is a family-owned business more than a century old. They have had success for all those years by treating their workers and the Teamsters Union, which represents their workers, as partners. They have the same goal: to make a great product, to make the company successful. They work together.

We in this body, with the American Rescue Plan, saved their union pensions in that plan. Now the company is

expanding production and hiring 40 more union workers. That is what we can achieve when we invest in the people and places that make this country work.

When you love this country, you fight for the people who make it work. That is what President Biden is doing. It is what all of us must continue to do to respect the dignity of work, so all work pays off and workers finally have real power in this economy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

CUBA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, the world and the country yesterday watched these images out of Cuba. It is really unprecedented. In 62 years of communist tyranny on the island of Cuba, we have never seen and there has never been what now is up to 40 cities in which people took to the streets—organically, unorganized, grassroots—to ask for the end of that tyranny. And I think it is important for a lot of people that are new to the issue to sort of understand what that means and what it is all about.

I think the first lesson we need to take away from it is that Marxism, socialism doesn't work. The way socialism, the way Marxism has always worked—the way it has always empowered itself—is it goes to a people and it immediately divides them. It says: There is the suppressor class, and then there is this victim class. And these evil oppressors—capitalists, in the case of socialism or traditional Marxism—they oppress the victims. And what you have to do is you have to give us the power in government to take care of these oppressors and to go after these oppressors, and if you give us that power, we will deliver you security and we will protect you from the oppressors. They ask for security in exchange for freedom. That is always the price that socialism asks for—security.

And what you wind up with is a country of people that hate each other, and they are angry at each other. A significant portion of the people in the country have to leave, have to flee, go to jail, because they are the oppressor class. Their lives are destroyed. Their family lives are destroyed.

But the socialism can't deliver the security. And when it can't deliver the security, you don't get your freedom back. And, in fact, when you start to complain about that, that is when the repression comes.

Well, that is what happened in Cuba. Socialism and Marxism has done to Cuba what it has done everywhere in the world that it has been tried. It has failed. It has failed. They gave up their freedom. Or they were told: Give up your freedom in exchange for a world-class healthcare system.

It is not a world-class healthcare system. In fact, it is a healthcare system that does not even have the ability to deal with COVID at its very basic level.

They said: Give up your freedom for economic security.

What economic security? People are hungry, homes are crumbling, and there is no economy. There is no real economy in Cuba.

Give up your freedom and you will have an education—free education for everybody.

That education—No. 1, you are a doctor, but you can drive a taxicab in Cuba and make more money. Or, No. 2, you get sent, forced to go, overseas and work basically on slave wages, no pay—barely any pay at all. It is basically human trafficking, as our own Department of State found when it looked at the Cuban doctors' program and how it has been abused.

So what has happened in Cuba is that socialism has failed. It has to repress people who complain about it. You don't get your freedom back.

And like socialists always do, they have to find someone to blame. And whom do they blame? No. 1, they blame anybody in the country who doesn't agree with them. You are immediately a counterrevolutionary. You are immediately a pawn of the imperialists. And, then, of course, they always blame the United States.

The problem in Cuba for the regime is that the people aren't falling for those lies anymore. They are not. The embargo, that is the first thing they blame: It is the embargo. The embargo is causing all of this.

Why aren't fishermen and farmers in Cuba allowed to fish or grow things and sell it to people? It is not the embargo that keeps them from doing that. It is the regime.

Why can't Cubans own a small business? Why can't a Cuban do in Cuba what they can do in Miami, what they can do in Washington, and what they do in countries all over the world, and they can't do it in Cuba? They can't open a small business. That is not the embargo that keeps them from doing it. In fact, U.S. law allows us to trade and to do commerce with small businesses that are independently owned by Cubans. Do you know why Cubans can't own small businesses? It is not the embargo. It is not the United States. It is the regime that doesn't allow it.

People have seen these lies. How can they afford to build luxury, four-star, world-class hotels for tourists, but they cannot afford to deal with the crumbling homes that Cubans are living in, with roofs literally falling in over their heads and with water leaking into operating rooms at hospitals?

Look at what they do with the money. Oh, it is because you don't allow more money to be sent. When an American or a Cuban American sends money to their family members in Cuba—in the past, through Western Union—the regime takes 10 percent off the top, and then they take those dollars you sent and they force the Cubans to convert it into worthless Cuban currency. They keep the dollars. And, then, guess what: If you want to buy anything, you have to buy it from a government store, and guess what the

government store sells things for? Dollars. That is not the embargo. That is the Cuban regime that does that.

And who is it that is putting people in jail, gets your head cracked open, and gets your door kicked out in the middle of the night? There are 80 people missing today. At least 80 people disappeared overnight. The families don't know where they are. That is not the embargo that is jailing people. That is the regime.

And that is what I tell people. You can open up all you want. We can pass a bill here that says: Open to Cuba—100 percent open. You can do whatever you want—full, free trade. You can do whatever you want. At the end of the day, the Cuban regime will control that opening. It is not just what we want to do. It is what they want to do.

Do you want to do tourism? We tried that in 2015 with the Obama changes, and do you know what they did? They said: Thank you. We love the fact that you are coming here as tourists.

Guess what. All the tourist sites are owned by a holding company named GAESA, controlled by the Cuban military. So everything comes through their hands.

You want to send them food? That is great. Guess who gets it: ALIMPORT, which is a government, military-owned agriculture company. You can't sell it to a small grocery store in Cuba or even a food wholesaler. It goes to the Cuban Government.

You want to send money? They take it. Do you know why? Because socialism is about control, and all of these things—tourism, food, money, medicine—it is all about control.

You want humanitarian aid? Let's get the Red Cross. Any of these vetted NGOs in the world should be allowed to go into Cuba. They won't allow it—A, because it is embarrassing to them. They have a world class healthcare system. Why do they need humanitarian aid? But, B, because they want to control it.

Send them vaccines, but if you put them in their hands—the government, the regime—guess who gets the vaccine: the people who behave; first, the regime elites and then the people who behave. If you are not behaving and if you are not going along with what they want you to do, you won't get a vaccine.

They will use any opening as a tool and as a weapon against their people because that is what socialism does. That is what these Marxists do in Cuba. They will use anything as a weapon against the people of Cuba.

What can we do is what people want to know. No. 1, I hope that we will all be clear about whose side we are on. You don't have to even agree with anything I have said. What you should agree with is that people everywhere in the world, including 90 miles from our shore, should be allowed to go into the street, peacefully march, call for an end of dictatorship, and not have their heads cracked open.

By the way, no one in Cuba has guns, except the military. So why are these repressive forces walking around with these rifles and people are getting shot? They are shooting people that literally are unarmed.

They should be able to do that, and it should be clear. We should be clear in our language. We don't just condemn this tyranny. We condemn this communist, this Marxist, this socialist tyranny. Call it for what it is.

No. 2, we should make clear that nothing is going to change. There is not going to be any sanctions changed as a result of this. On the contrary, I hope the Biden administration will now announce that they have finished their review of Cuba policy, and everything that is in place is staying in place.

To the extent we change policy, No. 3, I hope we make it a top priority to allow the people of Cuba to have free, unfettered, and open internet access. And the technology exists to do that with a satellite-based system. We should put the best minds to work on getting that done because if the Cuban people have free and unfettered access to the internet—the first thing the regime shut down yesterday was the internet—they can communicate with each other, and they can receive information and communicate with the world. Ninety miles from our shore, you should be allowed to do that.

No. 4, for all of those who believe and have faith in the international community—and I still hold hope that one day it will work again—where is Spain? Where is the EU? Where are all these countries that for years have given cover and protection to the Cuban regime and condemned America? They should speak out clearly that what is happening there is wrong and that repression is wrong. We should rally that. We should use our position of strength and power in the world and our influence in diplomatic circles to make that happen.

And, No. 5, I hope the President will be very clear with the regime in Cuba that we will not tolerate them encouraging a mass migration event—because I am warning you, this is what they do. They have done it twice already. They step back and they say: Look, if you don't lift sanctions, if you don't go back to the Obama-era policies, and if you don't get rid of the embargo, it is inevitable that you are going to have 50,000 people take to the ocean and head toward the United States.

They have used that against us twice. They did it in 1994, and they did it in 1980 with the Mariel boat lift. President Biden needs to be clear, whether it is through private channels or saying it publicly—be abundantly clear that we will treat the encouragement of mass migration toward the United States as a hostile action and act accordingly. That cannot—cannot—be tolerated.

I want to close with this. I recognize that most of the Members of this Chamber, most of the people here in

Washington, and, frankly, most of the people in the country do not pay attention to Cuba on a daily basis. I get it. I really do. But if you are not following the issue of Cuba, you can be forgiven for not knowing that what we are seeing, what we saw yesterday, what we are seeing today, what happened recently—none of this—was started by politicians. It wasn't started by me. It wasn't started by anybody in Miami or in Florida. It wasn't started by any think tank in Washington. It wasn't even started by political activists inside of Cuba.

Do you know who started what is happening in Cuba? Artists, poets, songwriters, writers, actors, musicians. They are the ones who started it—the San Isidro Movement—because they came after them.

And there is a song. A lot of people don't realize it. There was a song that came out earlier this year—a song that, by the way, if you play in Cuba, you will go to jail. The song's name is "Patria y Vida." Now, the slogan of the Cuban regime is "Patria o Muerte," meaning "Fatherland or Death." This song played on that, and it says, "Patria y Vida," which means "Fatherland and Life," instead of "Fatherland or Death." And the song is extraordinarily powerful because it was written by people and sung by people who have lived this reality and are living this reality. It so powerful. As I said, you will go to jail in Cuba if you play it.

What the song basically says in its lyrics is: Why can't people think in different ways and not be treated as enemies? Why is life so good for party insiders and their families but there is no food for average Cubans? There seems to be no embargo for the Cuban regime and their family members. Why can you build luxury hotels while our homes are crumbling? Why do Cubans have to suffer the indignities—the indignities—the simple things like not being able to bathe with soap, not being able to use deodorant, not having toothpaste—why do they have to deal with these indignities? And who—the song also asks—who told the regime that Cuba belongs to them and only them? Shouldn't it belong to all 13 million Cubans?

The chorus I will read first in English, and then I will translate it in Spanish, because it actually plays on "dominoes." Dominoes is a very popular game played by Cubans. It is played by everybody, but Cubans, in particular. It is a big game there.

The chorus reads:

(English translation of statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

And how it translates is that it basically says:

It's over. Your 59—

Meaning 1959, the year that Castro took over—

But I have double twos.

And everyone knows that in the dominoes game, if, at the end of a chain,

both dominoes, no one has any dominoes to put down, the game gets locked, and you count numbers and count dots to see who won.

So it says:

It's over. Your 59, but I have double twos. It's over. Sixty years with a domino game locked up for us.

Now, I know this is a very colloquial Cuban way of expressing it, but this is incredibly powerful. The people in Cuba understood what that means, and that means that all this ideology, all this stuff they talk about, and all these lies of the regime that worked out really well for them, people don't believe it anymore, and they are not afraid anymore. Meanwhile, their lives are ruined. Young people in Cuba, artists in Cuba who realize that the only country on this planet where Cubans are not successful is Cuba, and they are tired of it, and we should stand with them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1520

Ms. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise today to once again call for every Senator to have an opportunity to vote on a generational bill to fix how the military deals with sexual assault and other serious crimes.

It is the Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act. This bill will ensure that men and women who serve in our military have the opportunity for basic justice, basic civil liberties, and basic protection under the law.

I want to start by recognizing the monumental advance toward military justice reform made during our Senate work week. The Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military released their recommendations, which included removing the prosecution of sexual assault and related crimes from the chain of command. It is a historic sign of progress after decades of obstruction.

The Secretary of Defense has agreed with the Commission's findings that the removal of sexual assault prosecutions from the chain of command and the professionalization of the military justice system would benefit survivors and in no way diminish good order and discipline. It is also a historic sign of progress that President Biden has endorsed all of these recommendations.

After years—years—of pushing for these types of reforms, this change in thinking from our military and executive leadership is truly momentous. Every crime that the IRC reviewed, they recommended removing it from the chain of command. That is a clear recognition that the current military justice system is not capable of addressing the epidemic of sexual assault among our ranks and that it is not providing justice for our servicemembers.

As President Biden said, "This is the beginning, not the end of our work." While I welcome the IRC's recommendations, I am deeply heartened to see that Secretary Austin and Presi-

dent Biden both endorse the recommendations and will happily work with us to make them a reality. We also have to recognize that the IRC was provided a very limited task—to review only sexual assault and harassment in the military. No other crimes were under their purview. Unfortunately, they were also not asked to look at other serious crimes that are related, such as murder.

We as a Congress have been tasked with a larger job. It is our job to ensure that the military writ large works for every servicemember. The recent scandals at Fort Hood, the murder of Vanessa Guillen, and the deep racial disparities in prosecutions have made it plain that the need for reform in the military justice system goes far beyond sexual assaults. Vanessa Guillen was murdered, and she was harassed. Serious crimes such as murder deserve the consideration of military lawyers who are trained with expertise, not commanders.

For those who worry about the impact that this reform would have on command authority, I would point to the head of the IRC, the chairwoman, Lynn Rosenthal, who said:

The IRC rejects the notion that, by removing legal decisions about prosecution from the command structure, that commanders have no role. It's simply not the case. Commanders are responsible for the climates they create. They're responsible for working to prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment, and they're responsible for making sure that victims are protected when they come forward to report. So, the idea that they won't have an interest in solving this problem if they are not making [a] technical, legal [decision], we think, is simply false.

The same logic extends to all serious crimes. Commanders will still be responsible for setting the culture that prevents them, for protecting victims, and for maintaining an interest in solving these problems even if they are not making these complex, technical decisions about whether or not a case should go to trial. And in a great number of these cases that do not go forward to trial, they come back to the commander for the commander to use his discretion—nonjudicial punishment, summary court-martial, or special court-martial—the many tools he still has.

We must guarantee that we have a professional, unbiased system for all servicemembers. It is our constitutional duty to provide oversight and accountability over the Department of Defense. We are the authors of the military justice code. We are the ones who put it in place. It is Congress's duty to update it and to make sure it works. We can do that by taking this momentum and building upon it and passing the Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act this year. We have the votes to pass it in committee. We have the votes to pass it on the floor. This is an issue we have been fighting for and talking about and having hearings on for 8 years.

I began calling for a full vote on the floor on this bill on May 24. Since then, an estimated 2,744 servicemembers will have been raped or sexually assaulted. More will have been victims of other serious crimes. All of them deserve justice, and it is our responsibility to provide it.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that, at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate Armed Services Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1520 and the Senate proceed to its consideration; that there be 2 hours for debate equally divided in the usual form; and that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the bill with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I object to the Senator's request for the reasons that I have previously stated.

As the Senator from New York acknowledged, on July 2, President Biden announced that he "strongly supports" the recommendations put forth by Secretary Austin based on the work of the Independent Review Commission that would reform how the military prosecutes sexual assault-related crimes. Subsequent to the President's statement, the administration forwarded to the committee their legislative proposals to implement this reform.

I support and commend the President, the Secretary, and the IRC leadership and staff for their work, and I look forward to working with them and the administration and my colleagues, particularly my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, to enact this historic and momentous change to the Department of Defense.

Sexual assault is an unconscionable crime and a pervasive problem in the military and in American society. While the military has taken steps to try to stop sexual assault in the ranks, it simply hasn't been enough. I strongly agree with the President's statement that "sexual assault in the military is doubly damaging because it also shreds the unity and cohesion that is essential for the functioning of the U.S. military and to our national defense."

While this change will be important, enhancing prevention, education, and command climate and culture will also be vital. If this reform to the UCMJ is the only thing we do, then I think that it will not be successful on its own. We need to prevent these crimes, not simply prosecute them.

I understand that my colleague from New York, Senator GILLIBRAND, disagrees with the proposed scope of this reform. Nevertheless, I want to acknowledge her leadership on this issue. She has fought for 8 years for this reform, and that day, with respect to sexual assault, is coming. Indeed, just as a footnote, the legislation that is being advanced would include every crime incident to a sexual assault, so that if a

victim is subject not just simply to sexual assault but to other crimes in that incident, all those crimes are to be tried together. So the need to import crimes like murder and arson and other nonsexual related crimes is, in my view, not going to accomplish the goals that I think this Senate has been focused on, particularly over the last 6 months or so.

I intend to include the administration's proposals in next week's markup at the annual Defense bill, subject to amendment. I think that is important to know—subject to amendment, that the UC as proposed would not allow amendments. It would not allow colleagues on the floor to come up and say: I have a better idea. We will do that in the committee, as we have always done it in the committee or at least tried to do it in the committee.

I look forward to working with Senator GILLIBRAND and my other colleagues in the committee as we consider, debate, and vote on this and other proposals, but I still must reiterate my objection to the unanimous consent request.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. First of all, our bill is entitled "Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act," so, as the chairman has requested, there is a great deal of prevention in this bill. And I dare say, if the chairman was going to include all of the recommendations of the IRC, we would have a very strong base bill on which to work from, but I do not have the sense that that will be done. In fact, I do not have the sense that all the recommendations are being considered, so I intend to offer an amendment that encompasses all of the recommendations.

Second, the reason why murder and other serious crimes must be included is because there are two challenges within the military: One, sexual assault cases are not handled properly, and unfortunately too few go to trial and too few end in conviction. The rate of going to trial and the rate of conviction has gone down.

The second reason is, if you only allow sexual assault cases to have a proper review, you will further marginalize survivors of sexual assault, who, more often than not, are women who report those cases, because receiving special treatment and a special legal system will not create fairness within the military for them.

Third, there is enormous evidence in the last 3 years of considerable racial bias against Black and Brown servicemembers. In the marines, if you are a Black man, you are up to 2.6 times more likely to be punished. That is a serious problem, and this is an issue that has been investigated for a long time.

So I believe that the bright line of felonies, as our allies have already done in the UK, Israel, Canada, Netherlands, Germany, and Australia, is meaningful because they did it for defendants' rights, they did it to professionalize their military justice system, and they did it to protect all servicemembers. Servicemembers in the U.S. military deserve nothing less.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF SOUTH SUDAN

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge the 10th anniversary of South Sudan's independence. July 9 is a bittersweet day for the resilient people of South Sudan. For decades, South Sudanese fought a brutal war with the government in Khartoum in which 2 million people lost their lives. After decades of bloody struggle, the parties to the conflict signed the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, CPA, which provided for self-determination for the South and paved the way for South Sudan's independence in 2011, with the diplomatic support of the United States and others in the international community.

Yet the promise of South Sudan's independence has turned into tragedy. Deep fault lines that emerged during the country's long struggle for independence, accentuated by rivalry and rent seeking among the country's corrupt political elite, brought about catastrophe. A little over 2 years after independence, 400,000 people were killed and more than 4 million were displaced during the 5-year civil war between forces loyal President Salva Kiir against those aligned with Vice-President Riek Machar. Unspeakable atrocities were committed against civilians during the conflict, including women and children. In 2017, the war induced a famine that brought hundreds of thousands more to the brink of disaster.

The United States and its international partners have invested heavily in diplomatic efforts to support and

end to the conflict in South Sudan. Despite failed cease-fire agreements and the intransigence of the warring parties, in 2018 regional leaders working through the InterGovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD, were finally able to obtain agreement on what was called the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan, R-ARCSS. Although far from ideal, the agreement lays out a framework for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, political reform, and democratic transition.

But implementation of the agreement remains slow, and South Sudan sits at a very dangerous crossroad. Responsible parties have failed to implement major provisions of the R-ARCSS, including those on power-sharing, constitutional development, security sector reform, economic issues, and transitional justice, or have reneged on their commitments. Nongovernments to the R-ARCSS continue to wage an active insurgency, particularly in Equatoria. Locally rooted communal violence is also rampant, fueled by the invisible hand of rival national political elites. Kiir's security apparatus continues to violate the human, civil, and political rights of the South Sudanese people. Overlaying all of these problems is an urgent humanitarian crisis—driven by conflict induced food insecurity, displacement, and COVID-19—made all the more worse by longstanding efforts by the Government of South Sudan to undercut humanitarian access.

It is clear that South Sudan's stalled peace process needs a reboot. The lack of progress on implementation of the R-ARCSS has created significant concern about elections now slated for 2022—if they are even held. And if they are held, without prior implementation of core components of the agreement and other key actions, the polls could be a flash point for conflict and violence.

In order to prevent this outcome, South Sudanese leadership, the United States, and international partners must take urgent action.

Political leadership in Juba must immediately organize a process for robust and inclusive negotiations over a new constitution in a process that involves all South Sudanese stakeholders, including civil society and holdout rebel groups. While I would not presume to dictate what the South Sudanese people themselves might decide, it seems to me that devolution of power from the national government to the states and local administration, and genuine power-sharing at the national level are necessary ingredients to avoid the winner-take-all calculus that has served as an incentive to take and hold on to central power at any cost.

Regional neighbors must act as well. Ongoing instability in East Africa, including the war in Tigray, a fragile transition in Sudan, and political turmoil in Somalia, has distracted regional actors who traditionally engage